

Chugiak- Eagle River's destiny could soon be calling

Separate chapter development begins with phone survey

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This article published in The Alaska Star on Thursday, October 12, 2006.

The Consortium of Chugiak-Eagle River Community Councils selected Dittman Research Corporation to conduct a community telephone survey as ongoing efforts to draft a separate Chugiak-Eagle River Chapter in Title 21, the city's land use code, continue.

The consortium is comprised of six members from community council areas and a seventh at-large member.

Consortium president Bobbi Wells said the survey will help determine how local residents and business owners would like to see the area develop over the next two decades.

"The very first step is that we need to have that information about what the community wants," she said.

Wells said the projected cost for the statistically defensible survey, which is an important tool to gauge what the community wants, is less than \$18,000, adding that methodology and the firm's reputation were factors in choosing Dittman Research Corporation.

During the consortium's monthly meeting Oct. 4, a four-person sub-committee was formed to seek input from their councils and identify topics of concern regarding local land use regulations and development, such as design standards, density, building height limitations, snow storage, growth, neighborhood connectivity and open spaces.

"You have to decide before we even ask the questions what it is that we want in our land use regulations that aren't in Title 21," Wells said.

Terry Dittman of Dittman Research Corporation advised, "If it hasn't been coming up as a topic of issue, then maybe we don't need to ask about it. You don't want to include things you already know the answers to."

The consortium agreed the survey should not begin until after the Nov. 7 general election, but the actual start date has not yet been determined.

Dittman said research professionals will ask 400 randomly selected residents about 30 questions during the survey, which could take about 10 minutes.

"Four hundred is a nice, good sample for a small community like this. It's excellent. It will give you plenty of data," she said, adding that 500 statewide and 1,500 nationwide are typical sample sizes.

"The survey should help you to categorize and formulate your plan," Dittman said. "And do it in such a way that you are connecting with your communities and representing them in what you want to propose in your Title 21 plan."

Eagle River Valley Community Council president Bill Starr, said, "The idea, perhaps, in this master document that we're ultimately going to write, should be not only be to maintain what we have, but to make it a liveable community, attractive to others that we have an obligation to write the regulations for."

The consortium went before the Anchorage Assembly March 14, 2006, requesting a separate chapter that addresses land use development issues specific to the Chugiak-Eagle River community in Title 21, which is currently being rewritten.

The assembly unanimously passed a resolution March 28, 2006, supporting a placeholder for a separate Chugiak-Eagle River chapter in Title 21. The implementation schedule of the public hearing draft of the Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan update, which is awaiting deliberation and adoption by the assembly, also calls for the inclusion of a separate chapter.

A \$150,000 legislative grant was also awarded to help fund preparation of the chapter. Funds are being administered by the Federation of Community Councils.

A draft chapter would be submitted to the Municipality of Anchorage for public hearings and administrative approval before being incorporated into Title 21.

The consortium meets the first Wednesday of every month in the municipal meeting room in the Valley River Center. The next meeting will be from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Nov. 1. Meetings are open to the public.

For more information, visit
www.communitycouncils.org/servlet/content/consortium_c_e.html.

Reach the reporter at news@alaskastar.com.